

TESTIMONY OF
CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
SUBMITTED TO THE
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE
Wednesday, February 21, 2007

**SB 1013, An Act Requiring Acute Care Hospitals To Make Forensic
Nursing Services Available To Patients**

The Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony concerning **SB 1013, An Act Requiring Acute Care Hospitals To Make Forensic Nursing Services Available To Patients.**

SB 1013 would require each acute care hospital in this state to make available forensic nursing services to its patient. While CHA supports the goal of increased availability and use of nurses trained in forensic science to assess and treat victims of sexual and other crimes and to collect and document evidence, this bill as written fails to reflect the state's critical role and interest in forensic and prosecutorial matters and imposes an impractical burden on hospitals that could result in an inefficient allocation of scarce human resources.

Forensic nurses are specially trained to assess and treat victims of sexual and other crimes, as well to collect and document evidence that will aid law enforcement authorities in finding and prosecuting the perpetrators of such crimes. Nurses and other emergency personnel trained in forensic science perform a critical service for the crime victims themselves, for the healthcare delivery system as a whole, which, due to shortages of nurses and other healthcare professionals, is constantly balancing the allocation of resources to provide proper assistance to persons in emergency situations, and for the state, which has a crucial interest in preserving evidence to assist in apprehending and prosecuting the perpetrators.

The goal of increasing the availability and use of forensic nurses is laudable, but SB 1031 does not present a viable way to accomplish it. First, it would impose on hospitals an impractical unfunded mandate to increase the supply of trained forensic nurses. Second, the bill ignores the state's critical and necessary role in this area – the state should be funding this program to educate or train nurses or other emergency professionals in forensic science to support the victims of sexual or other crimes and the law enforcement authorities charged with apprehending and prosecuting the criminals.

CHA supports and would like to assist in the development and implementation of a centralized state-funded forensic nursing program that would recruit and train forensic nurses, increase forensic awareness of emergency healthcare professionals, and establish a system for timely and efficient deployment of forensic nurses throughout the state as they are needed. CHA welcomes the opportunity to explore a collaborative approach with the state, victims' advocacy groups and

other appropriate individuals or organizations to increase the use and availability of forensic nursing services. To accomplish this CHA recommends subsection (b) of the bill to be amended as follows:

(b) The Commission on the Standardization of the Collection of Evidence in Sexual Assault Investigations, in consultation with the Connecticut State's Attorney's Office, Connecticut hospitals and victims' advocacy groups, shall develop recommendations for the implementation of a statewide centralized state-funded forensic nursing program to increase the availability and use of forensic nursing services for victims of crimes.

Thank you for your consideration of our position.

For additional information, contact CHA Government Relations at (203) 294-7310.